THE

ATURE, EVIDENCES, and ADVANTAGES,

OF

HUMILITY,

REPRESENTED IN A

CIRCULAR LETTER

FROM THE

MINISTERS and MESSENGERS

OF THE

BAPTIST ASSOCIATION,

Assembled at NOTTINGHAM, *June* 2, 3, 1784:

taining the important Doctrines of Three Persons in the dhead; Eternal and Personal Election; the Original Guilt and pravity of Mankind; particular Redemption; free Justification by imputed Righteousness of Christ; the invincible Efficacy of divine ce; the certain Perseverance of the Saints in Grace to Glory, and Independency of the Churches inviolably.

the several Churches they represent, or have received Letters from, meeting at Sutton-Ashfield, Nottingham, Sheepshead, Leicester, Sutton-in-the-Elms, Arnsby, Foxton, Clipstone, Oakham, Soham, Kettering, Walgrave, Northampton, Road, Olney, and St. Alban's; as also to the many Churches not yet in this Association, who, notwithstanding, countenance it, by the Attendance of their Ministers and Members:—

ce be to you, and Peace from God our Father, and from the Lord esus Christ.

r Brethren in the Lord,

E doubt not but you will unite with us, in blessing God that we have been once more permitted to hold our annual meeting in and we trust, not without comfortable tokens of the Redeemer's e, and the gracious influences of his Spirit, which alone can render ordinances useful to the refreshment and edification of his people. heavy and continued rain, with other hindrances, prevented several brethren from assembling with us, and *one* was missing who met last year at the other extremity of our association; but now, when e into the neighbourhood of the place where he lately laboured so ly, alas, *the place that knew him once, now knows him no more!* He ved from thence, and *where is he?* We have no doubt but he is *into the joy of his Lord.*—May God prepare the next that is ap-

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pointed to death, or rather, may each *be alſo ready* to follow our brother *Guy* to glory.

We lament, that ſeveral bereaved churches are yet unfurniſhed with paſtors, though we truſt ſome have the proſpect of being ſhortly provided for. Pray ye the Lord of the harveſt to ſend forth more labourers, and to give them that are already employed for him more ſucceſs. Alas! we are ready to cry out, *We have not wrought any deliverance in the earth, neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen!* ‡ Lord, let thy kingdom come! Let Satan fall! Let Jeſus reign! May we all with one ſhoulder and with one conſent unite in the moſt unwearied exertions to promote his bleſſed cauſe; above all, *praying always with all prayer* † (public, ſocial, private, ejaculatory) for the effuſion of the Holy Spirit, whoſe influence alone can give us any ſucceſs.—Many of the letters this year, contain ſad complaints of languor, backſlidings, want of edification, and fewneſs of converts. See the remedy in Iſa. xxxii. 15. and to encourage you to apply for it, conſider Luke xi. 9--13. And remember there is no bleſſing that we have ſo great encouragement to pray for, as the Spirit of God. The infinite goodneſs of God's nature is more gratified, and the grand deſign of our redemption more anſwered, and our bleſſed Mediator more honoured, by the bellowment of this bleſſing, than by any other benefit we can deſire or receive. (See Edwards on Prayer, p. 55.)

We have already treated in our former letters, on ſome of the principal doctrines of the goſpel, and the bleſſed fruits of the Spirit which they tend ſo greatly to cheriſh. We have repreſented to you the nature of repentance and faith, of hope and love; and now, brethren, we truſt you will be willing to contemplate the nature, evidences, and advantages of true *humility*.

HUMILITY, or lowlineſs of mind, "radically conſiſts in a ſenſe of comparative lowneſs and littleneſs before God, or the great diſtance between God and the ſubject of this grace." Or it is that diſpoſition which inclines a perſon readily to take *as low* a place as belongs to him, and to think *no higher* of himſelf than he ought, but to think and act as knowing his *own place*, and keeping his *proper diſtance* from the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity;* and conſequently, not to exalt himſelf unduly among his fellow-creatures.

Humility muſt doubtleſs originate in a deep and abiding ſenſe of the infinite *natural* diſtance which neceſſarily ſubſiſts between God and every creature,

‡ Iſa. xxvi. 17, 18. † Eph. vi. 18. Read all the verſe, and mind it.

* Humility is not, properly ſpeaking, predicable of the divine nature. The ever-bleſſed God is infinitely remote from pride, but cannot be ſaid to have a *low* opinion of himſelf: though his opinion of himſelf is barely juſt, it is *as high as poſſible*; ſince even infinite intelligence cannot form an idea of infinite excellence that is beyond the truth. Jehovah has no diſpoſition to aſſume an higher place than his own, but he knows the *higheſt* is his *due*; the ſupreme throne is his abſolute right, and to take any inferior place would be to deny himſelf, and to give up the univerſe to anarchy and ruin.—That in the divine nature, which is neareſt akin to humility, is more properly ſtiled *condeſcenſion*, which is the diſpoſition that induces a *ſuperior kindly to notice his inferiors*, and may generally imply *gracious* notice of them, or ſhewing more concern for their intereſt than the ſuperior was abſolutely bound to, by the conſideration of any relation between him and the inferiors. The phraſe *to humble one's ſelf*, is ſometimes uſed as ſynonimous with *to condeſcend*, and is applied to the divine Being, who *humbleth himſelf to behold* his needy penſioners *in heaven and in the earth*, Pſ. cxiii. 6.—But ſtrictly ſpeaking, a being infinitely above all others, cannot be ſaid to *be humble*; as on the other hand, if any inferior being was known to be abſolutely and in all reſpects the loweſt in the univerſe, he would be incapable of *condeſcenſion*, having none below him to condeſcend to.—Nothing is more eſſential however to the holineſs of a *creature* than humility,

creature, even the moſt exalted in dignity, and the moſt perfectly free from ſin. The one only ſelf-exiſtent and ſupreme Being, who is poſſeſſed of abſolute and infinite perfection, muſt be infinitely above all finite beings, who derive their all from him, and are totally dependent upon him. The humility of the angels chiefly conſiſts in their thorough ſenſe of this truth, with an anſwerable frame of heart. In *imperfect* creatures, ſuch as ſaints on earth, humility muſt alſo include a deep and pungent ſenſe of that *moral* diſtance from God, to which they have wickedly wandered, and which ſtill remains in great meaſure, though they have begun to return to him. Indeed, if a ſinner is once brought by a realizing ſight of the divine glory, to a true ſenſe of the *natural* diſtance neceſſarily ſubſiſting between the Great Supreme and every finite being, this muſt immediately produce a conviction that ſin is infinitely evil: he muſt view it as the moſt heinous crime, for one ſo little, low and mean, ſo dependent and obligated as himſelf, to forget, deſpiſe, and diſobey his great and glorious maker: thus being conſcious of the infinite criminality of his own *moral* diſtance from God, he muſt condemn and abhor himſelf for his want of conformity to the divine law and the divine image.

As all true humility among men is founded in a ſenſe of our diſtance from God, (both our *natural* diſtance as *creatures*, which will never be removed; and our *moral* diſtance as *ſinners*, which we ſhould deplore, and long to have removed) ſo it includes a ſenſe of our *real relation* to our fellow-creatures. It will teach us readily to admit the ſuperiority of all thoſe who in any reſpect excel us; or to know the proper diſtance between us and our *ſuperiors*, freely acknowledging that to be as great as it really is;—it will induce us by no means to exalt ourſelves above our *equals*, but to treat them as fully on a level with ourſelves;—and will incline us not to magnify the diſtance between us and thoſe who in ſome reſpects are our *inferiors*, not to make that more than it really is, but willingly owning how near they are to us, and how inconſiderable the diſtance is that we are raiſed above them.

In order to a ſinner's being poſſeſſed of true *humility*, it is requiſite that he be the ſubject of *ſpiritual humiliation*.—The term *humiliation* is uſed in two ſenſes. (1.) As referring to *real antecedent dignity*, in which ſenſe we ſpeak of *Chriſt's* humiliation, who though he was rich, for our ſakes became poor; though he thought it no robbery to be equal with God, becauſe he was in the form of God, yet he took on him the likeneſs of man and the form of a ſervant, &c. Or (2.) Humiliation may refer to *former pride and undue ſelf-exaltation*, in which ſenſe we ſpeak of the humiliation of *ſinners*, who by grace are brought down from their high and lofty imaginations, and made willing to take their own place.

This humiliation is abſolutely neceſſary, and can only be effected by

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humility. And doubtleſs our bleſſed Lord, conſidered in his human nature, is the moſt eminent pattern of humility in the univerſe. No man, nor angel ever had ſo great and full a ſenſe of the diſtance between him and God, or was ſo lowly in heart as the man Jeſus. Never was humility ſo great, or ſo greatly tried, as his. The holy angels are perfectly free from pride, and have a clear ſenſe of their littleneſs compared with the great God, according to the meaſure of their capacity, and their preſent opportunities of diſcerning the vaſt diſtance between them and the ſupreme Being. But as they cannot be ſuppoſed to equal Chriſt in their knowledge of the infinite God, they cannot equal him in their ſenſe of the diſtance between infinite and finite; nor is the trial of their humility, in being ſent to miniſter to pardoned rebels, of an inferior race, in a ſtate of indigence and imperfection, comparable to the trial of humility which he met with in his ſtate of humiliation.

the power and grace of the Holy Spirit, for every ſinner is by nature full of pride and ſelf-exaltation, to ſuch a degree that God alone can pull it down and mortify it. True humility is an eminent part of that "*right Spirit*" which is produced in regeneration: no man can be a chriſtian without it; and it is never to be found in our world but in real ſaints. Others may be ſo partially humbled* as *through the greatneſs* of the Almighty's *power, feignedly to ſubmit* to him; but however they are overawed or terrified for a ſeaſon, they are ſtill *enemies* to God in their minds; and as great enemies to the real ſcriptural idea of grace, as they are to the juſtice and holineſs of God.

We defined humility as radically conſiſting in a ſenſe of comparative littleneſs before God. This is the only general foundation for all the genuine exerciſes of humility toward our fellow-creatures; though there may be ſome partial ſemblances of it, among ſuch as know not God, ariſing from mere natural timidity and baſhfulneſs, or the effect of cuſtom, education, and artificial complaiſance: and on the other hand, we muſt allow that remaining depravity in true chriſtians, eſpecially when its effects are heightened by a bad natural temper, and various external temptations, may greatly obſtruct the exerciſe of this and other graces; and in ſome caſes, ignorance, ruſticity and a contracted roughneſs of manners, may obſcure a little of its beauty; yet humility before God will ever proportionably influence the temper and conduct towards men.

The firſt original SOURCE of true humility is A SIGHT OF THE DIVINE GLORY. *Now mine eye ſeeth thee*, ſaid Job, *wherefore I abhor myſelf and repent in duſt and aſhes.* When Iſaiah beheld Jehovah's glory, he ſaid, *Wo is me, for I am undone, becauſe I am a man of unclean lips, for mine eyes have ſeen the king, the Lord of hoſts.* When Daniel *ſaw* that *great viſion*, his comelineſs was turned in him into *corruption.* Paul, when he had *ſeen that juſt one, and heard the words of his mouth*, thought himſelf *the chief of ſinners*, and deſired to *be found in him, having on his righteouſneſs and not his own.*—Every part of divine truth, when once we are brought to a ſpiritual underſtanding, tends to promote humility. The LAW requires the whole heart for God, and threatens the leaſt deviation from the line of duty with death, plainly pre-ſuppoſing the divine excellency, majeſty, and dominion; and that we are dependent and accountable creatures, wholly the property of our maker, and altogether at his righteous diſpoſal. Hence, profound humility appears eſſential to perfect obedience; nor dare *ſinleſs* angels indulge the leaſt idea of proper merit, conſcious they have barely done their *duty*, and can have no claim upon the Deity, unleſs on the footing of a free promiſe. While *ſinful* men cannot look into this perfect law, without viewing their crimes as infinitely odious, and perceiving that ſalvation can only originate in free and ſove-

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* Not having room here particularly to ſtate the difference between that *legal* humiliation of which mere *natural* men may be the ſubjects, and the *ſpiritual* or *evangelical* humiliation which is peculiar to true chriſtians, we would refer the reader to *Jonathan Edwards's* invaluable *Treatiſe on the Affections*, for a clear view of this diſtinction, p. 209. The whole of his fixth ſign of gracious affections, from p. 209 to 237, contains the moſt excellent obſervations on humility and pride. See, on the ſame ſubject, his *Thoughts on the Revival*, from p. 112 to 113. That bleſſed man obſerves in his experience, "There was no part of creature holineſs, I had ſo great "a ſenſe of the lovelineſs of, as humility, brokenneſs of heart, and poverty of ſpirit; "and there was nothing I had ſuch a ſpirit to long for. My heart, as it were, panted "after this, to lie low before God, and in the duſt; that I might be nothing, and "that God might be All: that I might become as a little child." And indeed, he never ſeems ſo much in his element as when he is writing of this amiable virtue.

reign grace. The GOSPEL confirms all the law aſſerts, implying moſt clearly that all its demands were equitable, and all its threatenings juſt; and ſhews the ſinner's inexcuſable guilt more fully than the flames of hell. Every doctrine conſpires to abaſe our pride, and thoſe truths which are the moſt eſſential foundation of our hopes, are moſt wiſely calculated to ſtain all human glory; nor can you realize them, ſo as to enter into their real import and deſign, without feeling their humbling tendency. While in like manner, an humble diſpoſition tends naturally to render us ſuſceptive of divine truth, as there is a ſweet harmony between this lowly temper and the bleſſed doctrines of grace. Beware, brethren, leſt unmortified pride diſcover, that, notwithſtanding your profeſſed attachment to theſe humbling ſentiments, you have only learnt the terms by rote, without entering into the genuine ſpirit of the truths you profeſs. If you are not humble, you are not *orthodox at heart*.

We would earneſtly ſolicit your attention, beloved brethren, while we point out ſome of the principal EVIDENCES of true humility. An humble *creature* will ever look upon himſelf as nothing when compared with the eternal, ſelf-exiſtent firſt cauſe:—will realize his conſtant dependence on God, for the continuance of his being, and every thing conducive to his well-being;—confeſſing himſelf inſufficient to preſerve, independently of his maker, that which he originally derived from him alone.—He will readily acknowledge the neceſſity of the divine favour to his happineſs;—and the neceſſity of divine influence to ſecure the preſervation of his moral qualities, and keep him from defection, apoſtacy, and ruin.*—He will cordially confeſs his obligations to the ſovereign favour of Jehovah; and fully acquieſce in the abſolute impoſſibility of proper merit in any creature with reſpect to God:—accounting himſelf his maker's property, he will conſider it as his duty, honour, and happineſs, to love him ſupremely, delight in him ſuperlatively, and make the divine glory the ultimate end of every action.—An humbled *ſinner* will view himſelf as infinitely vile and hateful on account of ſin;—will juſtify all the demands, and even the awful threatenings of the divine law;—will abhor the idea of ſeeking acceptance with God upon the foot of his own imperfect righteouſneſs;—and with ſweet delight and thankfulneſs, embrace the humbling method of ſalvation revealed in the goſpel.—His former pride and ſelf-righteouſneſs will appear unſpeakably odious; and however low he may be brought at preſent, he will be ſenſible that he is ſtill not near come down to his own place; he will, therefore, inſtead of thinking highly of his preſent humility, be abaſed under a ſenſe of his remaining pride; longing to lie lower ſtill in ſweet abaſement before the foot-ſtool of reigning grace.—Humility will lead the chriſtian to ceaſe from his own wiſdom, and not lean to his own underſtanding, nor ſet up his depraved reaſon againſt the inſtructions of him whoſe underſtanding is infinite. As he will not reject the doctrines of the goſpel becauſe of their tendency to abaſe human haughtineſs, and to exalt the Deity; ſo neither will he cavil at divine revelation, becauſe it contains ſome things myſterious and not fully to be comprehended. Indeed, a ſmall degree of reaſon (if human reaſon was not blinded by pride) would convince us, that it would be unreaſonable to ſuppoſe, there can be nothing myſterious in the divine nature, counſels,

* Yet probably this latter truth could hardly have been ſo thoroughly realized by angels, or any holy beings, if even at all diſcerned, had it not been for the permiſſion of ſin. See Dr. Bellamy's ſermons lately re-publiſhed by our brother Sutcliff, p. 108, 109.

or conduct; when yet we muſt acknowledge there are many myſteries in all ſciences, in our own formation and voluntary motion, and in all nature around us.—An humble man will not be ſtiff and dogmatical, but open to conviction, and jealous of being prejudiced, eſpecially by the undue influence of his own paſſions; willing to receive inſtruction, and embrace the truth, let it be propoſed by whom it will.—Humility will diſcover itſelf in a conſtant ſenſe of our weakneſs and inſufficiency, and our need to live upon Chriſt for ſtrength as well as righteouſneſs; exciting to inceſſant prayer for preſervation from falling, as conſcious of the imperfection of inherent grace, and ſtrength of indwelling ſin; being aware alſo of the unnumbered ſnares and temptations that ſurround us.—Humility will cauſe the chriſtian to *ſerve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling*, Pſ. ii. 11. deſiring, in the ſeaſons of his greateſt ſpiritual enjoyment, and communion with God, that while he exults in the ineſtimable privileges which are freely beſtowed upon him, he may have a proportionable ſenſe of the awful majeſty, and holy ſearching purity of God, to keep him from carnal confidence and ſpiritual pride. He finds the neceſſity of univerſal and diligent watchfulneſs and godly jealouſy, even when he is favoured with the moſt evangelical diſcoveries, and heavenly joy; leſt otherwiſe Satan ſhould come upon him at unawares, and throw him down from the top of the mount.—It will be natural to a very humble man to view himſelf as Paul did, as the *chief of ſinners*, and leſs than the leaſt of all ſaints. Certainly there is more ſin in the beſt man's heart, than in the worſt man's life. Having therefore a deep ſenſe of his peculiar obligations, and a knowledge of the plague of his own heart, he will be ready to account, that, all things conſidered, he ſtands more in need of forgiveneſs, and is more indebted to free grace, than any other ſinner in the world. In like manner, though he may not be able to avoid ſeeing the external blemiſhes and defects of his fellow-ſaints, yet, being conſcious of his own internal evils, he will be apt to think far more meanly of himſelf than of his brethren; he will ſooner ſuſpect himſelf than anybody, being diſpoſed to make the beſt of others, and to hope they are more free than he is, from innumerable deficiencies which he finds and laments in himſelf. —This bleſſed temper will teach you to *give* reproof to others with tenderneſs and gentleneſs, in the ſpirit of love. Not that it is an enemy to faithfulneſs, or would connive at ſin in any. But it would prevent ſcornful fierceneſs, and unchriſtian bitterneſs and ſeverity, which ſo often prevent the ſucceſs of the reproof, and harden the offender. At the ſame time an eminently humble chriſtian will *receive* the reproofs of others with meekneſs and thankfulneſs, even though they ſhould be mixed with ſeverity: he will ſay, *Let the righteous ſmite me, and it ſhall be a kindneſs, it ſhall be an excellent oil, which ſhall not break my head*, Pſ. cxli. 5. He will be glad of the aſſiſtance and advice of his brethren, for he knows his own weakneſs, and thinks he wants help from every body; whereas one that is full of ſpiritual pride, thinks that every body wants his help.—Great humility would teach you even when reproached by enemies, ſeriouſly to examine if you have not, at leaſt in ſome meaſure, given them occaſion thus to reflect upon you? And whether they have any juſt cauſe or not, it will prevent your rendering railing for railing, and evil for evil. It will be your concern to be *gentle towards all men*, and to *overcome evil with good*. You will endeavour *in patience* to *poſſeſs your ſouls*; *committing yourſelves*, when injured, *unto him that judgeth righteouſly*.—It is true,

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humility muſt oppoſe its oppoſite, *pride*; and an humble man muſt be grieved and pained when he ſees evident tokens of pride in others; but he will moſt of all oppoſe the remains of that accurſed evil in his own heart. His *own* pride will cauſe him to abhor himſelf; he will watch againſt it in all the modes wherein he can detect its operations. Pride is the moſt ſubtle of all the evils of the human heart; "the moſt like its father the devil in ſerpentine deceit and ſecrecy, appearing in a great many ſhapes undiſcerned and unſuſpected, and ſometimes as an angel of light. It perverts and abuſes every thing, even the exerciſes of real grace, and real humility, as an occaſion to exert itſelf. It is a ſin which has, as it were, many lives; if you mortify and ſuppreſs it in one ſhape, it riſes up in another. There are a great many kinds of it, that lie in different forms and ſhapes, one under another, and encompaſs the heart like the coats of an onion; if you pull off one, there is another underneath. We had need, therefore, to have the greateſt watch imaginable over our hearts with reſpect to this matter, and cry moſt earneſtly to the great ſearcher of hearts for his help. He that truſts his own heart is a fool." The humble man, therefore, has ſo much to do at home, that he cannot ſpend the chief part of his time in remarking and crying out of the pride of others, criticiſing on their dreſs,* carriage, manner of living, or other external tokens of pride; he has more difficult and important work, in maintaining a conſtant guard over his own proud heart, which is ſtill far from ſufficient conformity to the Lamb of God.—He that is eminently humble will not affect to ſet up himſelf above his brethren, but will be willing to be ſervant of all; deſiring to pleaſe others for their good unto edification: not indeed conforming himſelf to them in things that are ſinful; he will inflexibly adhere to duty, but in other things he will be gentle and pliable; reſolutely attending to God's will, but eaſily giving up his own.—Humility will teach you to pity ſincerely the moſt ignorant and erroneous of mankind; to *honour all men*; to be *ready to give an anſwer to every man who aſketh you a reaſon of the hope that is in you, with meekneſs and fear:* to be *gentle to all men, patient, in meekneſs inſtructing thoſe that oppoſe themſelves.* 1 Pet. ii. 17. & iii. 15. 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25.—Humility will be a bleſſed antidote for a murmuring ſpirit againſt providence. It will make you willing to be at God's diſpoſal; deſirous that he ſhould chuſe your inheritance for you, and rejoiced that he has the ordering of all your concerns. It will teach you *how to be abaſed* without repining,

* Perſons may doubtleſs be frequently chargeable with ſin on account of the article of dreſs. *Extravagance in dreſs* is a ſin againſt the 8th command, as it robs your creditors, your family, or the poor. *Indecent dreſs* is a ſin againſt the 7th command. And PRIDE *in dreſs* is a ſin againſt the 1ſt command, as it idolizes the paltry ornaments of a carcaſe doomed to putrefaction. But who are guilty of it, is the point to be determined? Doubtleſs all thoſe who unduly *value themſelves* upon ſuch a trifling external thing, whether they think themſelves much *preferable* to their neighbours on account of the finery, the neatneſs, or the plainneſs of their dreſs. It has been alledged, that ſome plain people may pride themſelves as much on being *out* of the faſhion as others can do upon their being *in* it. This is too true, and there are ſome who are much in crying out of others pride, that are more affected with their neighbours ring or ribband, than with all the filthineſs of their own hearts. But the apoſtle's RULE is, *not* to let any outward apparel be treated as your *chief ornament*, 1 Pet. iii. 3. And if you act according to the ſpirit of it, you will not be likely to be the firſt or foremoſt in the faſhion, and for the ſame rule you will not ſtudiouſly endeavour to be quite the laſt. You will rather dreſs below your rank than above it, and yet not aim to draw attention by affected ſingularity; leaſt of all, will you place religion ſo much in dreſs, as to render it needful for all your neighbours to wiſh for an inſpired taylor or mantua-maker, that they might have every garment as exactly according to rule as your own.

repining, and *how to abound* without being puffed up.—An humble man will naturally be *grateful*, and diſpoſed to confeſs his obligations both to God and man. A ſenſe of his own demerit, muſt fill him with aſtoniſhment at the divine bounty, and make him thankful for the kindneſs of his fellow-creatures; whereas pride makes a man a ſtranger to gratitude, for he never thinks he receives ſo much as his due.—Humility indeed is a friend to every other grace. God has expreſsly promiſed that he will *give more grace to the humble*, and it will naturally put them upon aſking him for it; for the more humble we are, the more ſenſible we ſhall be of our defects, and of our need of the ſupply of the Spirit. Beſides humility, in its own nature, ſtands related and is akin to other moſt excellent graces. —Thus it is cloſely connected with *meekneſs*, and muſt greatly preſerve the mind from being unduly ruffled by ſlights and injuries; while a proud man is pained and irritated by every neglect and affront.—It muſt tend greatly to make *ſelf-denial* eaſy to us. It will be eaſy for one who feels himſelf a poor, mean, vile creature before God, cordially to renounce his own dignity and glory; and alſo for God's ſake to deny his worldly inclinations, and part with earthly objects and enjoyments for the ſake of promoting the divine honour, and the kingdom of his redeemer.—Humility will cheriſh *brotherly love*, and greatly leſſen the difficulty of *forgiveneſs*, as it will teach you to take notice of the good that is in others, and to think the beſt of them, preferring them in honour as better than yourſelves: and to make the leaſt of their defects as compared with your own, eſpecially their deficiencies as to what you might ſuppoſe is due from them to you.—Deep humility will produce *reſignation* to the will of God, and *patience* under the croſs. It will excite to *godly jealouſy* over our own hearts, and conſtant *watchfulneſs* againſt temptation. It muſt greatly befriend a life of *faith* and *prayer*, for while we dread preſumption and ſelf-confidence, not daring to truſt to ourſelves in any reſpect, we are laid under an happy neceſſity of truſting in the living God, and making continual application to him.

The great *advantages* of humility may be eaſily gathered from the preceding obſervations, which the limits of this letter will not permit us more largely to inſiſt upon. Theſe, and many other conſiderations, ſhould be improved by you, dear brethren, as MOTIVES to excite you earneſtly to ſeek after and conſtantly to cultivate this ineſtimable grace, as well as to watch againſt the oppoſite evil, *pride*.—Humility is a characteriſtic whereby God has often deſcribed his dear children, and under which he has addreſſed to them many of the exceeding great and precious promiſes of his word.—God has recommended this ornamental grace to you, as of *great price in* his *ſight*, 1 Pet. iii. 4. and exhorted you to *be cloathed* therewith as with a garment, 1 Pet. v. 5. Our Lord declares, that he that is moſt *humble*, and like *a little child, the ſame is the greateſt in the kingdom of heaven*, Matt. xviii. 4. Accordingly the moſt eminent ſaints have always excelled in this grace.—It is one of the moſt conſpicuous beauties in the lovely character of Jeſus, and wherein he particularly exhibits himſelf as his people's example, ſweetly inviting them to learn of him who is *meek and lowly in heart*, with an aſſurance of its happy effects in promoting an heavenly tranquillity and ſacred compoſure of ſoul. Matt. xi. 29.

We hinted already at the tendency of *goſpel doctrines* to cheriſh the deepeſt humility, let us add a more particular exemplification of that remark. Surely you cannot reflect upon any of the great truths of the everlaſting

everlasting gospel, which are the sources of all your consolation, without perceiving abundant reason to be humbled to the very dust. For instance, Can we think of the *mediation of Christ*, the foundation of all our hope, and forget what rendered a mediator necessary? If we had been what we ought to have been, we should have stood in no need of any. Nor is it usual among wise men to have a mediator employed to settle a trifling dispute. But our offences (alas!) were far from trifling! They were great; so great, that even in the opinion of the friend of sinners, the mediator who undertook to reconcile us to God, it must have been an everlasting reproach on the divine character, to forgive them without a *sacrifice*. Although he had such interest with our offended sovereign on the one hand, and was so hearty in desiring our salvation on the other, he could do nothing in the case without becoming our *surety*, and making himself a *sacrifice* for our sins; he could not pretend to desire any mitigation of our punishment, but would sooner bear it *all* himself, than let it be suspected that God could connive at such guilt as ours. But can we ever forget what made *such* a mediator and *such* a sacrifice necessary; a sacrifice of more worth than all the universe! The need of such merit proves our demerit, and thus reflects shame on us in the highest degree. If we would lie low, let us repair to Calvary. Say, why did the Son of God die the most *shameful* of all deaths? Was it not that he suffered for the most shameful of all crimes? Why did he make his exit with the *wicked*, but to shew what we deserved? Why *between* heaven and earth, as if unworthy a place in either, but to point out our real character?—We glory in the doctrine of *imputed righteousness*, but even this reflects disgrace on us. Had we not been naked to our shame, we should have stood in no need of the righteousness of another.—We rejoice when we recollect our *effectual vocation*, but how should it humble us to reflect what it was which rendered that work necessary. Had we not been like the deaf adder which stoppeth her ear, which will not hearken to the voice of the charmer, charming never so wisely, the calls of God's word and providence had been sufficient. But we were proof against *them*. Christ's servants piped to us the melodious songs of salvation, but we would not dance; they mourned to us in doleful accents, of hell and damnation, but we lamented not. Mercy and wrath concurred to woo and awe us; were not these sufficient. No, we had loved strangers, and after them we would go. We hated Christ without a cause, and would not come to him for life. Not but that a return to God was a thing right enough in itself, the righteſt, fittest, happiest thing in the world. Surely there was misery enough in our former state to sicken us, and charms enough in Christ to allure us to him. Nothing prevented it, but wilful ignorance, obstinacy, enmity, unbelief, pride, and madness. It must be our extreme badness of heart, that rendered that promise necessary, "A *new heart* also will I give you, and a *new spirit* will I put within you."—If you, brethren, who are *called to be saints*, look *back* to the original source of your salvation in your *eternal election*, you have equal cause for gratitude and self-abasement. How *right* was it for God to take state upon himself and say, "*I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.*" He might as well have passed by one *creature* as another, for he was not bound to ensure the happiness of any by an absolute decree. And might as well, when he clearly foresaw our universal apostacy, have determined to sacrifice one *sinner* to his justice as another, when he knew all would do things worthy of death. You, therefore, have no room for boasting; since unmerited grace alone prevents your calling the damned your brethren, and hell your home.* But your election was *free* and *absolute*.

* Besides the consideration of our utter depravity and native aversion to the gospel method of salvation, may not only illustrate the *equity*, but prove the absolute NECESSITY of an election of grace. For if God had not first chosen you, you would never have chosen him: and this being the real case with all mankind, if God had not chosen any *before* time, he must necessarily have made choice of them in time, or else none would be saved, for none of the human race could be induced of their own accord

abſolute. For if God would have us, he muſt be determined in the matter. O, brethren, with what ſhame and thankfulneſs ſhould this idea fill your breaſts!—Furthermore, do we rejoice in an *unchangeable covenant?* never let us forget what rendered ſuch a covenant neceſſary. Was it that God wanted binding? Was he ever known to be fickle or falſe? No, but he knew what we ſhould prove. Every promiſe in the covenant of grace implies ſomething exceeding bad in us. Why did Jehovah ſay, "I will make a new covenant?" Was it becauſe the former covenant was a bad one? No, but *finding fault with* THEM, *he ſaith, I will make a new covenant,* &c. (Heb. viii. 8.) Why did he add, "I *will* be their God, and they *ſhall* be my people?" No need of this, but for that he knew we would not have him for a God, we would ſooner ſubſtitute any idol in his room, and give ourſelves to any one than him. As if he had ſaid, "I know you; you would ſooner make a god of your bellies (you beaſts!) than have me; you would ſooner give yourſelves to any idol, to any ſordid luſt, than be my people: but I *will,* and you ſhall!" His ſaying "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, &c." is as if he had ſaid, "I know that ſuch is their abominable depravity, I might write it any where elſe in vain! and even then, ſo bent are they to backſliding, that were I not to exert my almighty power, they would go off and apoſtatize after all."—So then, if we look *forward,* the promiſes of *continued ſanctification* and *perſevering grace* ſhould ſtill farther excite ſelf-abaſement. For after God has brought us into his ways, we ſhould never hold on, if he had not engaged for us, "they ſhall not depart from me." So then, if ever we get to heaven, it will be becauſe God willed it, and owing to nothing elſe, for we never do any thing of ourſelves but turn away from God.—O what humiliating truths are theſe! What glory is due to God, and what ſhame to us. Well might he ſay, *Not for your ſakes do I this, ſaith the Lord Jehovah, be it known unto you, be aſhamed and confounded for your own ways.*

As all the *doctrines* of God's *word* are calculated to humble us, ſo it may be expected all the *dealings* of his *providence* will be wiſely adapted to anſwer the ſame happy end. The moſt common occurrences of every day may well remind us of our inceſſant dependance on God, and the more remarkable interpoſitions of his hand in our favour, ſhould inculcate the ſame truth with additional weight. Our ſpecial trials are deſigned to abaſe us in a variety of ways, by trying the weakneſs of our graces, the ſtrength of our ſinful paſſions, and giving God an opportunity to diſplay his tranſcendent wiſdom and glory. Pride is the moſt ſtubborn enemy to God in the human heart, and therefore God will perſiſt all through life in contriving and executing ways and means to mortify it. All the way he leads us through the wilderneſs is a *right way* to *humble us,* and bring us down to *our own* place, that we may readily give him *his own* place and rejoice in his highneſs. Study humiliation therefore, for God is determined to humble you if ever he ſaves you. Indeed, if you have any true ſpiritual wiſdom, you will be thankful for every means that promotes this happy end, and endeavour to improve all your trials for the increaſe of your humility. Study the law and goſpel, and your own hearts & lives, with this very point in view. Look back on the miſchievous madneſs of your former courſe. Compare your preſent attainments with your advantages, and your obligations. Notwithſtanding all the ſweet and awful methods God has taken with you, the obligations he has laid you under, the infinite pains he has taken to bring you to a right ſpirit, how much unmortified pride and rebellion remains to this day. Was ever wretch ſo vile! How far, how infinitely far are you from being what you ought to be! What ſhame and confuſion of face belongs

accord to chuſe him: as, therefore, he clearly foreſaw their real diſpoſition, there can be no room to complain of his doing that in eternity, which if he had *not* done *then,* he *muſt now* have done, or have left all to periſh:—unleſs, indeed, he had choſen to ſave all, in which caſe there could not have been any clear evidence of his right to chuſe in the affair, nor of the *neceſſity* of his chuſing any.

longs to you! Could you once have thought you would have proved ſuch a froward ungrateful creature as you have been ſince your converſion? How muſt holy angels or ſaints in heaven abhor your frame of mind? How muſt God himſelf abhor you, did he view you otherwiſe than as cloathed with the righteouſneſs of his Son? Watch, then, and pray againſt pride! And make the growth of humility a main teſt of all growth in grace. Examine, do you get poorer in ſpirit than ever, more inwardly and deeply ſenſible of your wants and weakneſs, your vile and ſinful defects, your entire dependance on God, your infinite obligations to free grace? And does this humility appear genuine by its influencing your whole conduct, making you more watchful, patient, meek, forgiving, modeſt, thankful, more willing to be the ſervant of all, &c.? You cannot well thrive in any other grace unleſs you grow in this: and if you increaſe in real, genuine humility, you cannot be in an ill condition. Without it, all gifts, privileges, honours, and external advantages, are likely to become ruinous temptations to pride, and means of falling into the condemnation of the devil. So far as it is poſſible for a perſon to have the exerciſe of any other grace, while he is greatly deficient in humility, there is danger that Satan will take occaſion from thence, to lift him up to the pinacle of ſpiritual pride, that he may afterwards caſt him down into an horrible pit of ſin and ſorrow. In fact, all ſuppoſed experiences that are not accompanied with deep humility are ſuſpicious and dangerous, if not wholly deluſive.

We only add an hint reſpecting the uſefulneſs of this virtue in the management of all your ſocial tranſactions, exhorting you that in all your church affairs nothing be done through ſtrife or vain glory; but ſubmit yourſelves to one another in the fear of God, for only by pride cometh contention. Who is a wiſe man and endued with knowledge among you? let him ſhew out of a good converſation his works with meekneſs of wiſdom, &c. James iii. 13--18.

Our earneſt prayer to God is, dear brethren, that you and we may grow as in every grace, ſo eſpecially in this grace, which we ſincerely wiſh may be promoted by this ſhort deſcription of its nature, evidences, and uſefulneſs. Pray for us. Signed in behalf of the brethren, by

RICHARD HOPPER, Moderator.

MINUTES.

Met as uſual for prayer, and reading the letters from the churches, on Tueſday evening and on Wedneſday morning.—The public meeting began at half paſt ten, when brother *Blackſhaw* began in prayer, and brother *Sutcliff* preached from 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20. "*What know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your ſpirit, which are God's.*—At half paſt two, brother *Shaw*, of *Collingham*, prayed; and brother *Gill* preached from Luke xi. 28. "*But he ſaid, yea, rather bleſſed are they who hear the word of God and keep it.*"—At ſeven o'clock, brother *Jones*, of *Lincoln*, prayed; and brother *Fuller* preached from 2 Cor. v. 7. "*For we walk by faith, not by ſight.*" Each of the miniſters who preached, concluded the ſeveral opportunities in prayer. Divine worſhip was alſo attended with ſinging at proper intervals. The ſame evening the Circular Letter, which had been drawn up by brother *Ryland*, jun. was read and approved, and ordered to be ſigned by the Moderator.—Met for prayer, conſultation, and the communication of experiences, on the Thurſday morning.

Added upon profeſſion of faith and experience	- -	31
By letter of recommendation from other churches	-	2
		—33
Removed by death	- - - - -	34
Diſmiſſed to other churches	- - - -	5
Excluded	- - - - - -	2
		—41
Decreaſe	- - - - - -	8

The next aſſociation to be held at *Oakham*; brother *Hall*, ſen. & brother *Ryland*, ſen. to preach; in caſe of failure, brother *Hopper* or brother *Butler*.—Put up at the *Crown*.

P. S.

P. S. Upon a motion being made to the miniſters and meſſengers of the aſſociate baptiſt churches aſſembled at Nottingham, reſpecting meetings for prayer, to bewail the low eſtate of religion, and earneſtly implore a revival of our churches, and of the general cauſe of our Redeemer, and for that end to wreſtle with God for the effuſion of his Holy Spirit, which alone can produce the bleſſed effect, it was *unanimouſly* RESOLVED, to recommend to all our churches and congregations, the ſpending of *one hour* in this important exerciſe, on the *firſt Monday* in every calendar *month*.

We hereby ſolemnly exhort all the *churches in our connection*, to engage heartily and perſeveringly in the proſecution of this plan. And as it may be well to endeavour to keep the ſame hour, as a token of our unity herein, it is ſuppoſed the following ſcheme may ſuit many congregations, viz. to meet on the firſt Monday evening in *May*, *June*, and *July*, from 8 to 9. In *Aug.* from 7 to 8. *Sept.* and *Oct.* from 6 to 7. *Nov. Dec. Jan.* and *Feb.* from 5 to 6. *March*, from 6 to 7; and *April*, from 7 to 8.—Nevertheleſs if this hour, or even the particular evening, ſhould not ſuit in particular places, we wiſh our brethren to fix on one more convenient to themſelves.

We hope alſo, that as many of our brethren who live at a diſtance from our places of worſhip may not be able to attend there, that as many as are conveniently ſituated in a *village* or neighbourhood, will unite in *ſmall ſocieties* at the ſame time. And if any *ſingle individual* ſhould be ſo ſituated as not to be able to attend to this duty in ſociety with others, let him retire at the appointed hour, to unite the breath of prayer in private with thoſe who are thus engaged in a more public manner.—The grand object in prayer is to be, that the Holy Spirit may be poured down on our miniſters and churches, that ſinners may be converted, the ſaints edified, the intereſt of religion revived, and the name of God glorified. At the ſame time remember, we truſt you will not confine your requeſts to your own ſocieties, or to our own immediate connection; let the whole intereſt of the Redeemer be affectionately remembered, and the ſpread of the goſpel to the moſt diſtant parts of the habitable globe be the object of your moſt fervent requeſts.—We ſhall rejoice if *any other chriſtian ſocieties* of our own or other denominations will unite with us, and do now *invite them* moſt cordially to join heart and hand in the attempt.

Who can tell what the conſequence of ſuch an united effort in prayer may be! Let us plead with God the many gracious promiſes of his word, which relate to the future ſucceſs of his goſpel. He has ſaid, *I will yet for this be enquired of by the houſe of Iſrael, to do it for them, I will increaſe them with men like a flock*, Ezek. xxxvi. 37. Surely we have love enough to Zion to ſet apart *one hour* at a time, twelve times in a year, to ſeek her welfare.

*** The two following new publications are recommended to thoſe who already adhere to the practice of *believers baptiſm*, as a ſacred inſtitution of our bleſſed Redeemer; and to the candid peruſal of all impartial enquirers after truth.

PÆDOBAPTISM EXAMINED, on the Principles, Conceſſions, and Reaſonings of the moſt learned Pædobaptiſts. By ABRAHAM BOOTH. Sold by Buckland and Dilly, price 4s. in boards.

The Inconſiſtency of Infant-Sprinkling, with Chriſtian Baptiſm, Religious Uſefulneſs, and Salvation by Grace alone. A reply to a Treatiſe on Baptiſm, lately publiſhed, from a manuſcript of the late Rev. Mr. M. Henry. In ſix letters to the Rev. Mr. Robins, of Daventry, the editor. By Jos. JENKINS, A. M. Sold by Buckland.

Shortly will be publiſhed,

The Nature and Importance of Walking by Faith and not by Sight. A Sermon preached at Nottingham before the baptiſt aſſociation, and printed at the requeſt of the church and miniſters. By Andrew Fuller, of Kettering.

The firſt Principles of the Oracles of God, repreſented in a plain and familiar Catechiſm, for the uſe of children. By J. Sutcliff, of Olney.

Lately publiſhed,

Seaſonable Hints to a bereaved Church; and, The Bleſſedneſs of the Dead, who die in the Lord. Two diſcourſes delivered at *Sheepſhead*, Oct. 26, 1783: occaſioned by the death of the Rev. William Guy, late paſtor of the baptiſt church there. By John Ryland, jun. Printed and ſold for the benefit of the widow.

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